



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 2  
290 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK, NY 10007-1866

JUN 09 2014

Richard Filkins  
Project Manager  
NYS Department of Transportation  
Region One Design, POD2-3  
50 Wolf Road  
Albany, NY 12232

RE: PIN 1085.42 Route 146 over the Mohawk River, Rexford Bridge

Dear Mr. Filkins:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) May 2014 Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for P.I.N. 1085.42, Route 146 over the Mohawk River. The purpose of the project is to replace the existing Rexford Bridge (BIN 4-03836-0) due to infrastructure safety concerns, congestion, and a higher than state average of accident rates on the corridor. The preferred alternative would replace the Rexford Bridge with a new four lane bridge, and improve the intersections of Route 146 and Riverview Road and Route 146 and Aqueduct Road (just south of the bridge). At Riverview Road, the existing traffic signal would be replaced with a new signal system that will accommodate added through and turn lanes at the intersection. The existing signalized intersection of Route 146 and Aqueduct Road would be replaced with a roundabout. The project is located in the Towns of Niskayuna and Clifton Park in Schenectady and Saratoga Counties, New York.

EPA has a few comments on the EA, but in general we find the document to be supportive of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) for the preferred alternative. Our comments are as follows:

- The project area of the Mohawk River has been designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as Zone AE, and is subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event. EPA understands that both Clifton Park and Niskayuna ordinances prohibit any new construction within the limits of a floodway unless a technical evaluation demonstrates that such construction shall not result in any increase in flood levels. Before making a FNSI determination, the placement of the bridge foundations must be clearly identified on a floodplain map to ensure there will be no violation of these ordinances. EPA also recommends that NYSDOT consult with the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region 2 Office on the proposed bridge's placement in the floodplain and the hydraulic modeling results.

- As stated in the draft EA, that project is located within the Schenectady/Niskayuna Sole Source Aquifer. However, EPA does not concur that the federal sole source aquifer review by EPA under Section 1424(e) of the Safe Water Drinking act is not required. This review should provide construction details about spill containment and control, and depth.
- The preferred alternative will require the removal of approximately 4.75 acres of trees. While not required, EPA recommends that all trees removed be replaced with appropriate native trees in local or regional parks or natural areas. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and other pollutant particulates, mitigating the effects of climate change. Trees also create habitats and food sources for migratory birds and bats, reduce temperatures in suburban environments, and increase livability in communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft EA. If you have any questions, please contact Lingard Knutson of my staff at (212) 637-3747.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Grace Musumeci", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Grace Musumeci, Chief  
Environmental Review Section  
Clean Air and Sustainability Division